



CONTACT: Tom Marshall CHP (916) 657-7202
Mark DeSio Caltrans (916) 654-5782
Bill Branch DMV (916) 657-6437

Mike Marando OTS (916) 262-2975
John Carr ABC (916) 419-2525
Chris Nance BT&H (916) 323-5416

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 22, 2005

05-45

“BUCKLE UP” FOR THANKSGIVING!

Recognizing that safety belt usage is key to roadway safety, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) will implement a Maximum Enforcement Period (MEP) between 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 23 and midnight, Sunday November 27.

“The latest data shows that 92.5 percent of Californians are wearing their safety belts,” said Business, Transportation and Housing Agency Secretary Sunne Wright McPeak. “That’s a great accomplishment, but because we know that safety belts save lives, we are making every effort during this holiday season to increase seat belt usage.”

During this MEP, up to 80 percent of CHP officers will be on patrol. “We recognize that many more families are traveling together during this holiday period and we want to be proactive in our enforcement efforts so that families can safely arrive at and enjoy holiday celebrations,” said CHP Commissioner Mike Brown.

“Caution is the best gift motorists can give to themselves and to highway workers this holiday season,” said Caltrans Director Will Kempton. Caltrans is one of five traffic safety departments under BT&H taking part in Operation STAR.

The Thanksgiving MEP is also an Operation CARE (Combined Accident Reduction Effort) holiday. Operation CARE is a joint program of the nation’s highway patrols that

promotes safe driving on interstate highways during holiday periods. CARE highways in California include Interstates 80, 40, 15 (San Bernardino to the Nevada border) and 5 (Bakersfield north to the Oregon line).

The state Office of Traffic Safety director believes wearing a safety belt is the single most effective thing motorists can do to save lives and reduce injuries on California's roadways. "Two seconds is all it takes to buckle a seat belt. That could be the difference between life and death in a crash," said Christopher J. Murphy, Director of the state Office of Traffic Safety. In addition to adults, parents and guardians need to make sure their younger children are in properly attached safety and booster seats and those six and over are buckled up as well.

Last year, 56 people were killed on California roadways during the Thanksgiving holiday period. Of those killed, 38 percent were not wearing their seat belts. Many of those people would be alive today if they had just taken that one second to buckle-up.

In addition to the safety belt effort, the Operation STAR partners will intensify their efforts to get impaired drivers off the road. Alcoholic Beverage Control investigators will be working in communities to ensure that licensed businesses are complying with the law. "Thanksgiving is a time for families and friends to get together and we want to do our part to ensure it is a safe holiday period," said ABC Director Jerry Jolly.

That sentiment is echoed by DMV Chief Deputy Director Ken Miyao. "Especially during this time of year, the DMV encourages everyone to be safety conscious, whether driving or a passenger in a car – it's simple. Be safe. Buckle up. It's the law," said Miyao.

#####